

**The German guerrilla:
terror, reaction, and
resistance**

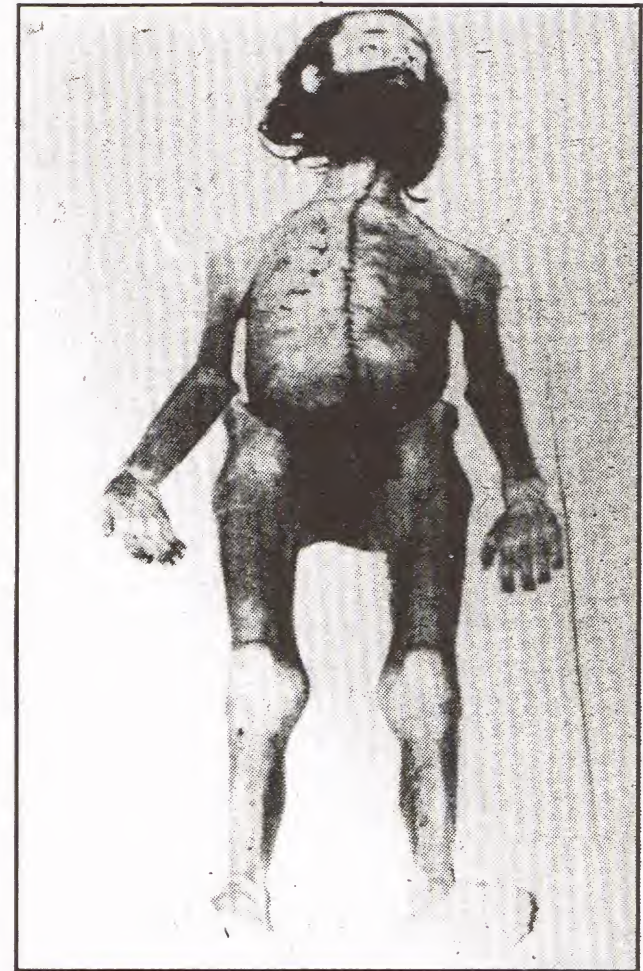


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'I have kept this picture in my
wallet to keep my hatred sharp'

HANS JOACHIM KLEIN



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1 Preface

There are many important reasons for publishing this interview with Joachim Klein, the German guerrilla who was wounded during the kidnapping of the OPEC ministers in Vienna. Klein is trying to 'come in from the cold' and obviously this influences some of what he says, but it does not invalidate the basic points.

Such rare accounts are vital if we are to make up our minds on both the moral and strategic aspects of armed resistance. Any form of 'party line' on this question is abhorrent because an individual must take up a position according to her own beliefs. But that doesn't mean that we cannot clarify the issues in libertarian terms, and for this purpose we have included a short postscript examining political violence.

Klein's account of life underground is fascinating for, without dramatising it, he conveys the atmosphere through his concise answers. One of the most important aspects which emerges is the loss of personal identity through living a false life with false names and documents. Another is the desperately restricted circle of people with whom the guerrilla can discuss his feelings. Both of these products of secrecy cut him off from reality and thus make him lose touch with the very people he is trying to help. This armed elite cannot avoid having an incestuous circuit of ideas which must be influenced by the need to bolster their own morale, and that will automatically warp anyone's view of events.

The very nature of clandestine existence and warfare has an appalling effect on the minds of those who carry it out. To trust nobody and to rely on the gun at every moment to bolster one's confidence gives the individual concerned a totally different perspective. Secrecy, short-term 'military necessity' and opportunist alliances change values and moral judgements. How else does one find anti-fascist guerrillas at Entebbe separating Jew from Gentile by allowing themselves to say that anyone with a Jewish name must be a Zionist?

Klein accuses his former comrades of being mercenaries but offers no details to support this apart from references to the luxurious

life style to which some apparently became accustomed. It would be fairer to say that their sense of values was altered by the life which they had to lead, but this is a criticism of the inevitable effects of such a life. It would be completely wrong to impugn their original motives on these grounds. Once again we see the (inevitable?) distortion — the false identity and false environment which create a false outlook, and which in turn distances and alienates them from their comrades and from their former idealistic selves. We already know that, however lofty the motive, power corrupts. Secrecy and violence are its two most important ingredients.

KLEIN

3 Introduction

Waiting for me one evening at the offices of Liberation was a brief message arranging a meeting somewhere abroad. The letter was signed Hans-Joachim Klein, a name I knew well: he was a member of the commando which on 21 December 1975 attacked the OPEC conference in Vienna, capturing 11 ministers from various oil-producing countries. A spectacular operation, all the more spectacular at the time, which finally ended in deadlock. Klein was wounded so severely that it was decided he could not be moved, but in the end he was taken aboard the aircraft which flew the members of the commando and the ministers to Algiers. It was this operation which heralded the reappearance of the man called Carlos. Photographs taken as the aircraft departed and landed clearly showed the presence of the Venezuelan who was such a mysterious figure that many people on the left had almost allowed themselves to be persuaded that he was a figment of the imagination. The other members of the commando concealed their faces, but the man who one year earlier had killed three inspectors of the DST, the French secret police, in a flat in the rue Toullier, did not choose to hide his own identity.

On some of the photographs he was even to be seen chatting amiably with Bouteflika, the Algerian foreign minister, after the plane had landed in Algiers. Klein, in the meanwhile, was on his way to hospital, barely alive.

As it happened I had already met Klein one year earlier in December 1974, on the occasion of the visit by Jean-Paul Sartre to Andreas Baader in prison at Stuttgart-Stammheim. As we arrived at the airport, Klein was there to screen Sartre from the crowd of photographers. It was he who took the wheel to drive us to the prison and then to the hotel where the press conference had been arranged. A brief meeting with the man whom the press were later to describe, not without malice, as chauffeur to the philosopher-terrorist.

After the operation in Vienna there was no further word of Klein. The only trace of him was his photograph alongside that of Carlos and several other people on the wanted posters at border crossings. Underneath was the price on his head: 50,000 DM. The next

time he surfaced was one day in May 1977, when he wrote a letter to Spiegel magazine in which he dissociated himself from the armed struggle and more importantly revealed details of two impending guerrilla actions in order to frustrate them: planned attempts on the lives of Heinz Galinski and Ignaz Lipinski, leaders of the Jewish communities in Berlin and Frankfurt.

Klein explained that these actions — and the methods to which the guerrillas were resorting — had no connection with the motivations which had led him to take up the armed struggle. He had therefore decided to end his own involvement. And as evidence of his decision he enclosed the pistol which he had carried in Vienna.

In the letter left one evening in my pigeon-hole at Liberation, Klein expressed his intention of explaining at length and for the first time his own motivations and experiences as a former terrorist. I was to be prepared to spend several days with him in a foreign country. Our first meeting took place in the middle of a public park in a large city. He approached me from behind and smiled broadly as he sat down beside me to explain the programme: we were to spend several days on holiday together by the seaside. A fairly long journey brought us to our destination in the vicinity of a small house, where for several days we assumed the roles of model holidaymakers. For him at least this holiday was not entirely a pretence: it was apparently the first he had enjoyed in a very long time. Wanted by police forces in several countries and threatened by his former comrades, Klein's existence is not an easy one. But he seldom complains. Is it any wonder that once or twice he should let slip the phrase 'a dog's life'? The life of an exile without even the company of other exiles. The life of an outlaw without even the company of other outlaws. Separation from his friends. Incessant worry about his personal safety. A future without prospects and a past of infinite regrets.

He has reason to be bitter, but that is not his style. 'It's a dog's life,' he says, 'but I find pleasure in living'. It is noticeable from time to time that he becomes tense, as if the recollection of some episode from his past were like a blow which he must ward off. But he takes hold of himself at once and resumes his expression of obstinate indolence, that of a man who is no longer surprised by anything but filled with admiration by everything.

Mid-way between self-mockery and nostalgia he sits in front of the little stove on which we cook our meals and relives his brief history as an international terrorist with a room at the Hilton. And then all of a sudden he remembers with longing the hot sausages that are sold from mobile stalls along the avenues of Frankfurt. Ah, Frankfurt . . .

if only he could, that's where he would hide. Watching the demonstrations passing through the streets, catching sight of his friends from behind the curtains. A lost child of the German extra-parliamentary opposition, Klein wants only to find a way back to it so that he might play his part once more.

Far from Frankfurt and far from everything, he is making up for lost time by making full use of each moment that remains to him. The worker who ten years ago stubbornly refused to open a book, now enjoys Rilke and has begun to read Joyce. Within reach is his only treasured possession, the collection of classical music from which he is inseparable. 'At first,' he says, 'I couldn't stand classical music. My companion in Frankfurt wouldn't listen to anything else and I just made fun of her. Then I gradually began to like it myself. I was a bit stupid really. I wouldn't admit it. Until the day when she took me by surprise, listening to Mozart on my own. . . .'

Every day that week we spent hours on end talking about Klein's life, the course of German leftism, the armed struggle and its international ramifications. For his part he asked me to tell him the latest news from Germany and describe recent debates on the French and Italian left. This statement is the result.

It is a statement which complements that of Bommi Baumann. Early in the '70s Baumann had been one of the original members of the June 2nd movement. Finding himself at odds with the armed underground in Germany, he decided to leave and to tell the story of his own involvement in an appeal to others to abandon a path which, he felt, could only lead them further and further astray. A path, he said, which can lead only to 'our becoming buried in the rubble of the collapsing system'.

Klein here describes his experience as an 'international terrorist'. The phrase is no exaggeration. For his own words, while betraying no one, reveal that international terrorism is in fact a reality. . . . His statement is the first to come to us directly from the inside. 'I want to give an account of a political experience, to pass on the lessons to be learnt from it,' he told me. 'It's certainly not my intention to put anyone in danger, however wide the rift that divides us today. The only names I will give you will be those of people who are already known or who have died. . . . What I want to explain is what has become of the guerrillas' political project.'

What Klein has to say will inevitably smash many of the idols in the leftist pantheon. We refused to believe in this cowboy character who went by the name of Carlos. Yet he exists. And at the time Liberation itself was the first to comment ironically on 'the tapestry of

the great international terrorist conspiracy' (3 July 1975). However much you may choose not to believe him, you have no choice but to listen to Klein: his journey has taken him to the very end of the leftist line. In some respects, the course of his life has been more like a caricature of it. Just that.

The newspaper *L'Aurore* was quick to say that he had sold out to the Israelis. A cheap slander. Having watched him for days on end and knowing how he survives, how this has torn his life to shreds, I have no doubt as to his sincerity. Klein is no ex-soldier who has withdrawn from the battle to recount his memories of the war. His decision to leave the guerrillas and live in hiding for the rest of his life, alone, cut off from his roots, shows as much courage as his decision to join them. He has come to the end of the road, but his journey has not made him completely pessimistic, as the tragic life he leads today might lead one to believe. Nor does what he has to tell us mean that he is in a blind alley, but rather that he stands at the crossroads of a new beginning. Knowing when to stop: that has also been important.

One might argue with the few analyses he puts forward, but one cannot refuse to listen to his statement. With all that has happened in this last decade, that is the very least we can do. The time when we could patch together a past to fit the model of our dreams is long since over and done with.

Jean-Marcel Bouguereau

4 KLEIN Interview

It is the constant cry of the press in Germany that the guerrilla groups are made up of the sons and daughters of middle-class ex-Nazis and liberal intellectuals. But you are a worker. And your mother, who died soon after you were born, was Jewish and was imprisoned for a time in Ravensbruck.

I know hardly anything about my mother. My father never talked to me about her. That she was Jewish and was sent to Ravensbruck, I only found out much later from other people. By then I was 17 or 18. I've read several books about Ravensbruck. It was a camp for women and most of the prisoners were political offenders who originally came from Austria. I'd give a lot to know the reason why she was sent there.

Tell me something about your childhood.

It can be summarised in two words: beatings and confinement. I lived in an orphanage and then with foster-parents until I was 9 or 10. That was the best time. Then my father remarried and took me back to live with him. That's when the beatings started. Today it seems unreal, but at the age of 18 I went off to bed at eight in the evening without batting an eyelid, and he was still beating me. Until the day when he tore a chain-bracelet which a girlfriend had given me from my wrist, on the pretext that it looked effeminate. It was then that I punched him in the mouth for the first time. I packed my bag and walked out. I'd already run away once before: during the week I was working as an apprentice and at the weekends he locked me in. One day he shut me up in my room with his fucking canary, in its cage. I said to myself: 'You can't escape yourself, but at least you can let him go free'. I opened the cage. My father beat me so badly I thought I'd never walk away from it. I went along to see the social security people and I told them: 'Either I kill someone and get sent to prison, or you can send me to a home'. In the end, that's where I landed up.

What did your father do for a living?

He was a cop. But don't write that he's my father. As far as I'm concerned, he's no father to me.

What did you do as an apprentice?

Engineering. Even there, the teachers at the technical college used to

knock us about to make us learn our lessons. I went back to live with my father. Then I worked as a telegraph messenger for a year or so. Later, I was a member of a gang. We did all sorts of stupid things. We pinched motors and went joy-riding until the tank was empty. Somebody grassed and I ended up in the nick along with the others. Eight months. They let me out on condition that I found a job within a week. A right con, as you can imagine. I didn't make it. In the end a prisoners' association found me a job in a restaurant in the West End, that's a district in Frankfurt where there were plenty of students. That was in 1967, when the movement was at its height. That's when I first got involved.

Had you heard about the student movement before?

Yes, I'd read about it in *Bild*. That was the only paper I read.

And what did you think of it?

The same as my father: just troublemakers, out to stir up the shit.

How did your ideas change?

Something very important happened. Whenever my father talked to me about the police, it was as defenders of the weak. And he had passed on to me an image of women as fragile creatures. That was quite a contradiction for him, since he didn't think twice about knocking his own wife about whenever he got drunk on Friday evenings.

One day I went along to watch a demonstration out of curiosity. And I saw three cops beating up a woman. Two images collided, my image of women and my image of cops. I went to help her. I hit out and got hit back. From that moment on I began to think. I began to talk things over with the students. To ask questions. To wonder why it was that these people turned out regularly to get themselves beaten up. Of course, things weren't like they are today. You only had to knock a cop's helmet off and he would drop everything and start looking for it. But all the same I wondered why the students were prepared to get their faces smashed in. That was another thing I'd learnt from my father: that nobody does anything without a reason. I took to buying another newspaper. I began to hear about Vietnam. I read my first leaflet, not that I understood any of it. One day I went to a teach-in. I noticed that everyone there was smoking Gauloises, so I began to smoke them too, so as not to appear different. I spent more time coughing than smoking.

Who were the first friends you made?

Only one of them was a student, the others were a guy who'd dropped

out of work, an apprentice printer, and a young worker who had a job in a factory. They were anti-authoritarians. They went to meetings but weren't members of any group. They didn't like being dictated to. When they met me, they didn't say straight off: "Look, a worker, time to begin the education classes". They asked themselves, "What do workers like best?" — "Pubs". So they took me round the pubs, which were centres of political activity in Frankfurt. That's how our discussions began, quite naturally, over a pint. Things flowed very smoothly, in the literal sense of the word!

That's when you began to get politicised?

It was all very vague. We talked about Vietnam and then moved on to other things. To our personal problems. It was completely different to what I went through later in the conscientious objectors' group. The person in charge of that was a Stalinist of the first order. Political education meant going to school. It seemed to me that I ought to take the trouble to learn something. So I forced myself to put up with something I really had no time for. If you can imagine it, he wanted us to be able to talk about rocks in the abstract. First we had to be told what abstract meant. And talking about rocks in the abstract is still something I'd have difficulty with today. Basically, we just didn't understand, our minds were on other things.

The gang from the West End district was something else entirely. The Leninists thought we were all crazy. But in spite of this street-life side of things, there was a continuity in this cut-rate politics. It took some time, considering where I came from. A few months before, I had still been the sort who went out looking for fights with the Italian immigrants who came into our cafe. To me they were just "wops". Later, when things of the same sort slipped out while I was speaking, they didn't throw Marx and Engels in my face. They were patient.

What was your opinion of the students by now?

Super-authorities. All my life I'd been spoonfed with stuff like that. My father, my teachers, *Bild-Zeitung*, they all told me: "Today they're stirring the shit, tomorrow they'll be the snobs who spit in your face". My ideas changed pretty quickly. I discovered a kind of solidarity that I didn't know existed. Where I came from, no one knew what the word meant. Not in the gang I was in either: it was more like a secret society. People went off at a tangent if that happened to be more in line with their own interests. With the students, it was different. Of course there

office and said to them: "As allowed by articles 3 and 4 of the Constitution, I am refusing to do my military service for such and such a reason..." A week later, once they'd filled out all the forms and drawn up all the reports, I cancelled the whole thing. They had to do the same amount of work all over again to get things straight. And I left them with the threat that I'd make another application the following week on different grounds.

Shortly before I went into the army, I had read my first political book: *From the White Cross to the Red Flag* by Max Hoelz. He was already an anti-authoritarian in his own way. He didn't want to escape from one system just to find himself in another one. He refused to be manipulated. He wanted to stay human. It made a big impression on me.

What about Vietnam?

That became important after I left the army. To my mind, it wasn't simply an international question, but also an internal problem. The B52's stopped over at Wiesbaden on their way from Vietnam. Even if they can't be separated, it was more of a moral identification than a political one. That injustice reminded me of what I'd felt when I read the novel where Karl May describes the extermination of the Indians. Even at that time, anyone who took to the streets to demonstrate against this genocide was already a terrorist. In his newspapers, Springer attacked us with a notorious word from the Nazi era: *ausmerzen* (literally, to eradicate, remove without trace). Were there already violent demonstrations?

What would have been the point of demonstrating peacefully against genocide? Each time, there were groups which went out looking for confrontation. I was always in one of those. People tried to attack American buildings. With paving stones and then with petrol bombs. It was something which grabbed me by the guts. When the news of the bombing of Haiphong harbour came through, I hung about the consulate the same evening, on my own, with the fixed idea that I had to do something. Even though all I had on me was a box of matches in my pocket. And so it just wasn't possible, I couldn't do anything.

How did this mini-escalation from paving stones to petrol bombs take place?

Force of habit. In the beginning, whenever there was a demonstration, the newspapers were full of it. Then it became an everyday happening. When the first paving stones were thrown, it hit the headlines again. They were more horrified by a few broken windows than by the deaths of thousands of people. That's the morality of



"I am a member of the SPD. I protest at the American war in Vietnam"

those who govern us.

Then they got used to that as well. They took notice again only when the first petrol bombs were thrown. There were never any long communiques or elaborate explanations of these actions. The newspapers decided for themselves who was responsible.

Were there also people opposed to these actions?

Yes, they thought it was better to argue. But arguing got nobody anywhere. In the early days people on demonstrations used to shout: "Come down from your balconies, come and support the Vietcong". I never saw a single person come down. Except to smash us in the face. That made me think discussions were a load of crap. There was no connection at all between our violence and what the Vietnamese were going through. And now when I read the Pentagon Papers, it just pisses me off even more. If only they could have been published at that time, people would have realised that it was necessary for them to go even further.

But there was a continuing link between these two types of action? There weren't really two camps. It was genuine schizophrenia. I can remember a friend of mine who was well-known for that kind of night action. The day after America House was burnt down, when he came into the Voltaire Club (then the meeting-place of the left in Frankfurt), everyone shook him by the hand with a look of complicity. Including those who were most opposed in principle to the action of the "anarchos", as they called us. It made them feel less impotent...

Would you say that this feeling of impotence was peculiar to the situation in Germany?

When I came to France around that time, I noticed that things were different. In the early days, at home, there was scarcely any violence worth mentioning. We tried to explain what genocide was. And the Germans themselves were specialists when it came to genocide, although nowadays, when you read what is being written about Nazism, you get the impression that the whole thing was managed by a couple of punters working all on their own.

Nothing that we have been able to say over the space of these last five years has made any kind of an impression. Even someone like Brandt came down on us, even he was incapable of making the same few gestures as his chum Olaf Palme. On the contrary, they squashed us. The few Social Democrats who came on demonstrations kept their heads down. It was only towards the end, when it became obvious that things were moving in the other direction, they they demonstrated by hanging placards saying "I am a Social Democrat" around their necks. After the fall of Saigon, they all began to say it was a puppet government. Just what we had been saying for years. It's this morality of lies and hypocrisy which provided the guerrillas with their base.

Did fascism have a particular role to play in your fixation on Vietnam?

The Germans should have been the first to start shouting about Vietnam. All the Germans, not merely a few leftists. They did nothing. Arguing

didn't move them, pamphlets didn't convince them, they got used to broken windows, the battles with the police, even the petrol bombs. So there came a point when it was decided that something new would have to be found.

That's when the actions by the RAF began?

Yes, but in the meantime there had been other events which made a deep impression on us, like the Black September massacre in Jordan. Not to mention Iran, to which the whole of the German left had been specially sensitive since the death of Benno Ohnesorg (3).

Actions by the RAF began in 1972. What were your own first impressions?

In fact, the first action goes back a bit further, to the liberation of Baader (4). At the time it caused a great deal of discussion on the left. Some people said it was stupid. That he didn't have much of his sentence left to do. But not me. I knew what it was like to be in the nick. I said "Every extra day of freedom is a gift from heaven".

Then there was the bomb in the American HQ in Frankfurt and the death of the officer, Blanquist, who was a veteran of the Vietnam war.

I was totally in favour of it, the death of that guy as well. It was an improvement on the actions which had gone before. It was obvious that the Americans could never have conducted the war without support from the rear. And Germany was one of their bases. Then there were the bombs in Heidelberg, where the Americans had that computer for military operations. But no one knew about that until afterwards. I don't believe the RAF knew about it. The first mention of the computer came while Baader was in prison. If they had known about it, they would have said so in their communique.

Did the left show the same schizophrenia on this occasion too?

Yes. Everyone thought that Frankfurt and Heidelberg were all right, basically. Of course there were the Leninists, who were calling for mass

- (3) Benno Ohnesorg, a student from Berlin, was shot and killed by a police officer named Karl-Heinz Kurras on 2 June 1967, during a demonstration in Berlin against a visit by the Shah of Iran.
- (4) On 14 May 1970 a commando comprising Gudrun Ensslin and Ulrike Meinhof liberated Andreas Baader who, while serving a prison sentence, had received permission to work for several hours in the library of the Faculty of Social Sciences in Berlin.

activity while they were waiting for the people to get involved in the struggle. But the German people never will get involved. And if the people ever did join up with the Leninists, then I really would be worried. This period also marked the high point of Leninist activity. After years of openness and political co-operation during the period of the student movement, there was the turning towards sectarianism and dogmatism. **Between the student movement and the appearance of the spontis, there was a vacuum which they filled.**

Were you in a group yourself?

Yes, still with the anarchos. It was called the FNL (Federation of the New Left).

What were things like in Frankfurt at that time? During the period when all the political papers had names like Red Star, Red Dawn, Red Flag?

It was also the time of the big establishment boom, and the first communities, attempts at working with the immigrants in their own areas. The experience of community centres like the Gallus. Boese had been one of its founders (5). He was doing street theatre and always played the wicked capitalist. As for myself, community work just wasn't my thing... As an experience it did have its positive side, but it got on my nerves a bit.

Then there was a whole series of housing occupations which again was very important for you?

The Frankfurt city council had decided to undertake the redevelopment

- (5) Wilfried Boese was killed at the age of 29 together with his companion Brigitte Kuhlmann during the attack by an Israeli commando on the airport at Entebbe. Before his name appeared on the list of wanted terrorists, Boese had been one of the leading figures of the leftist movement in Frankfurt. There was no confrontation, no project that he was not involved in. A discreet but omnipresent figure, he had been one of the founder members of the "Red Star" press, was prominent in the Black Panthers solidarity committee, and was a founder of the Gallus Centre. When Red Aid was first organised, he was involved again, but it was not known that he was at the same time the organiser of the Revolutionary Cells, the third German guerrilla group, which for a long time was overshadowed by the RAF and the June 2nd movement.



House occupations in Frankfurt, 1973

of the older areas. One of the first to be affected by what we, for our part, saw as a deportation was the West End, where many of the communes had been set up. We defended the houses, symbolically at first, then when nothing happened, there was a change to real street battles. This led to the setting up of a defence force which trained in the woods on Sundays. It was a very elitist effort. Women were excluded. By demolishing houses in the city centre, they were threatening our whole way of life. One time they mobilised up to 1200 cops to take possession of a house.

You were always around for the fighting?

Always.

Did you contribute much at discussions and meetings?

No, it was OK when there were four or five of us, but when there was an assembly I stayed silent. I never managed to put into words what it was I was thinking.

You were also an active militant in Red Aid?

Yes. At that time things were at their worst for the prisoners. The period when Ulrike Meinhof and Astrid Proll were in prison at Cologne-Ossendorf. They were in total isolation. They even had to liberate Astrid Proll because she had been so broken down by it all. Then there were the killings of leading members of the guerrillas: Petra Schelm, Georg von Rauch, Thomas Weissbecker. And that of Mac Loyd, a Scotsman who had nothing to do with the guerrillas.

What did you think of the RAF?

Basically, I supported them. Then I had my first — negative — experience of the RAF. I helped them with finding places to stay, for instance. Once, I found them a house but it was absolutely necessary for them to leave at the end of a week. They didn't want to go. I threatened to throw them out. They threatened me back. I hadn't liked that, particularly since Boese had told me similar stories about the way they used people. All that manipulation had rebounded against them.

A guy like Ruhland (6), for instance, he was manipulated from start to finish. He did all kinds of things for them without understanding much about politics. And then when he was arrested, it was the cops who manipulated him and turned him into a "witness for the crown" on the prosecution side. All that didn't lead to my becoming sceptical about the RAF as a whole. My solidarity with the prisoners was total, but I didn't really want to work with them any more. That's also one of the reasons why I went into the Revolutionary Cells and not into the RAF.

How did you come to join?

It was Boese who suggested me...

Who was Boese?

He was killed together with his companion Brigitte Kuhlmann on the famous Entebbe operation. At the time he was the leader of the Revolutionary Cells. I had known him for quite a while. He was a fairly well-known figure in leftist circles in Frankfurt. We worked together in Red Aid. He knew that I'd had a quarrel with the RAF. And then I didn't make any secret of what I was thinking. When the June 2nd Movement

- (6) Karl-Heinz Ruhland had been a member of the initial RAF network. After his arrest he became the principal witness for the prosecution at the RAF trial.

executed Schmucker, I had been one of the few people in Frankfurt to say with Boese that it was necessary to execute traitors (7).

So you were something of a hard man?

Let's say that I wanted to be. I didn't go the whole way.

Were you interested in guns?

I'd always been a keen reader of a specialist magazine for gun enthusiasts...

For art's sake?

My interest was purely technical... You've got some nerve, you journalists! (Laughs) I'd studied the legal aspects of possessing guns while the trials were taking place. But when I got my first gun, after my entry into the Revolutionary Cells, I used to take it out of its hiding-place once a month to clean it. But I wasn't a gun fetishist.

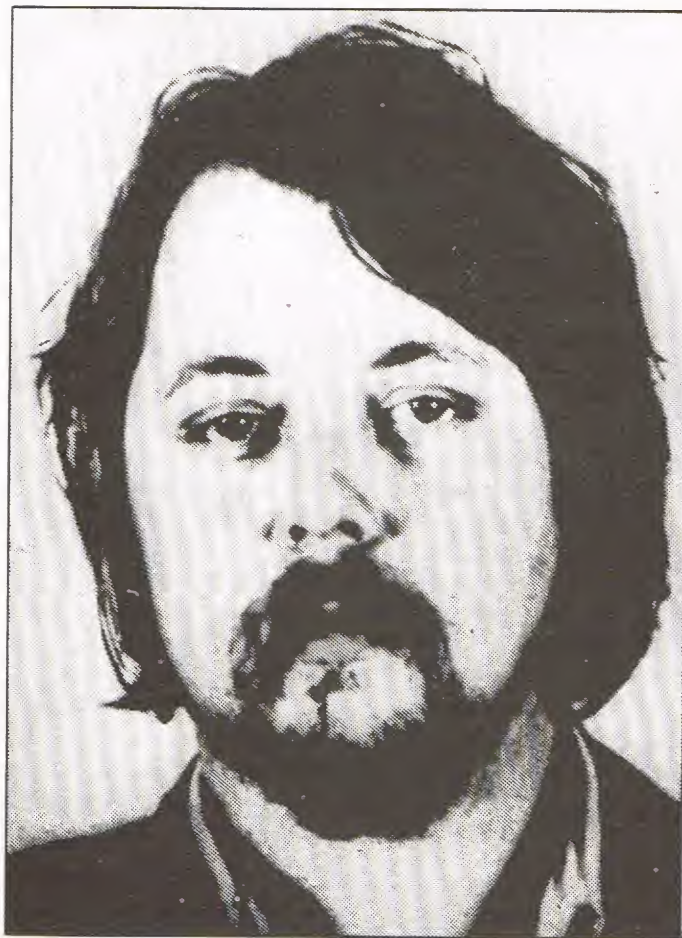
From that moment on you began to lead a double life?

Yes. I was initiated into all the tricks of the guerrillas: security, codes, weapons... I learnt to forge documents. And for the rest of the time I continued with my life as a militant in Red Aid. At the same time I toned down my declarations in favour of the armed struggle, as Boese had suggested I should.

And then?

There had been the death of Holger Meins (8). For me, it acted like a trigger: I had to put an end to the impotence of legality. But all the same I still had a while to wait, my hour hadn't come yet. I'd been over-joyed by the killing of von Drenkmann following the death of Meins (9). But on the other hand, one section of the left was dismayed by it. The campaign which had been given an impetus by Holger's death

- (7) Ulrich Schmucker was a member of the June 2nd movement. He was executed for having given information to the police.
- (8) Holger Meins, one of the members of the initial RAF network, was arrested at the same time as Baader and died on 9 November 1974 as a result of a hunger strike. Although six feet in height, he then weighed only six stone eight pounds.
- (9) Von Drenkman, a judge of the Berlin court, was to have been kidnapped on 12 November 1974. For unknown reasons the kidnap plan failed and he was executed by the commando.



Wilfred Boese, 29: died at Entebbe with his friend Brigitte Kuhlmann during the attack by the Israeli commando.

When he created 'Red Aid' he was already the organiser of the 'Revolutionary Cells', the third group of the German guerrilla movement which, for a long time, remained in the shadows of the RAF and 2nd of June Movement.

By the time of the Munich affair Boese was already in touch with the Palestinians. During a trip to Paris to meet Carlos, Boese was arrested by the French police. To get himself out of trouble he invented a detailed and fictional story which included the name Carlos — invented for the occasion. Extradited to Saarbrück, he was freed by a local judge and shortly afterwards went underground.



"I have kept this photo in my wallet to keep my hatred sharp"

was brought to a dead stop by the killing. For quite a while I kept the horrendous photograph of Holger's autopsy with me, so as not to dull the edge of my hatred.

The first time I saw you was in Stuttgart during Sartre's visit to Baader. What were you doing at that point in time?

On the one hand, I was working in a lawyers' office, which was my legal job, and on the other I was already a member of the RZ, the Revolutionary Cells, which together with the RAF and the June 2nd



Stuttgart, December 1975: Jean Paul Satre and Klaus Croissant in front of Stammheim prison. Hans-Joachim Klein in the foreground

Movement was one of the three guerrilla groups existing in Germany. Unlike the other two, it was a group which didn't make clandestinity a hard and fast principle. No one knew that I was with the guerrillas but at the same time I wasn't underground. Croissant had known me while I was a member of the Red Aid in Frankfurt. He had been getting all kinds of threats and first of all asked me to come to Stuttgart for a couple of weeks as his bodyguard. His car had already been sabotaged once and someone had tried to break into his flat. When Sartre came to Stuttgart the threats became more frequent and Croissant called on me again, to protect Sartre. That's how I became his "chauffeur"...

When was it you went underground?

Never, really. I only did it because I was forced to after Vienna. That was my first action. I was badly wounded and had been recognised: at the hospital they had time to take my photograph and fingerprints while I was under the anaesthetic. I've only a vague memory of it. But if every everything had gone off as planned, I intended to go back to Frankfurt.

You didn't want to disappear underground?

No. I was the only one in the commando who wore a mask. It was agreed that I should remain incognito the whole time. I'd arrived in Vienna in December with "Bonnie" Boese, the leader of the Revolutionary Cells.

How many of you were there in Vienna?

Six who were operational. The others arrived over a period of time. Carlos first. Then four members of the RZ who didn't participate directly in the commando but whose job it was to reconnoitre the area and gather information. Then the other four arrived: the pseudonyms of the three men were Halid, Jussif, and Joseph, and there was a woman, Nada. Before they arrived there was a preliminary discussion with Bonnie and Carlos. A round-up of the situation of the Palestinian resistance. Then the plan for the operation. That's when I found out that the idea for Vienna had been suggested to Haddad (10) by an Arab head of state and that the inside information we had been promised came from the same source.

(10) Wadi Haddad, whose death in East Berlin was announced last year, had been one of the founders, with his friend Georges Habbash, of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. He left to found the PFLP Special Operations, a group which under various labels later stood behind most of the hijackings and commando actions of recent years.

What was the objective of this action?

Not to stir things up a bit, as was suggested. The aim was to force each of the OPEC ministers to make a declaration in support of the Palestinian cause before we liberated them in their countries of origin.

That was all?

No, there was also a plan to execute two of the ministers, Amouzegar from Iran and Yamani from Saudi Arabia.

Did you agree to that?

With regard to Amouzegar, I didn't have any problems. I could just imagine the pleasure it would give to thousands of Iranians to hear that that bastard had been killed. You don't have to read more than a fraction of what has been published about the torture chambers run by Savak (11) to be convinced of that.

In Yamini's case, things were different. With Amouzegar, it meant something to me, but as for the other one... Well, Carlos explained the role of Saudi Arabia, but that didn't change my feeling that it was a very abstract thing.

Then he explained our tactics once we had the hostages in our hands. What it came down to, quite simply, was that anyone who resisted was to be killed. The same went for anyone who tried to escape or became hysterical. Also for any member of the commando who refused to obey an order and endangered the operation. That was a bit too much for me to take. I got the impression that he didn't realise that you can use a gun only to wound someone. I began to argue back and explain that I wasn't a killer. That I was quite willing to shoot if necessary but that that didn't mean that hysterical hostages had to be executed without fail.

So Carlos went over it all again. That it was a matter of survival. A political and military necessity.

Boese did the translating. And at the same time he tried to convince me. To explain that perhaps Carlos had exaggerated a bit, but that was just to help me understand. Thinking back, I'm not sure that Bonnie always translated what I was saying accurately. Or that Carlos would have kept me in the commando if everything had been as clear as all that.

What were your feelings before the operation?

The night before, it was my birthday and I felt very alone and dejected. How did you get to the OPEC building?

The simplest way of all: by tram. Our pockets were stuffed full of weapons and we could hardly move. We went in like that, through the main door. The porter even saluted us! My job, once we were upstairs,

was to stay in the entrance hall and keep an eye on the telephone, and to frisk people and send them into the conference room once the others were inside. I heard someone shooting in there.

Did you open fire yourself?

Twice, at a telephone. There was a secretary who kept on trying to use the phone. I tried to make her understand that she was to stop, but I didn't want to say anything in German. I told her, 'Finish', then I put a bullet into the telephone. That didn't stop her: she began again, using the one alongside.

There had already been fatalities.

Yes, a Libyan in the conference room. And then an Iraqi and an old Austrian cop in the entrance.

When were you wounded?

A little later, a group of Austrian marksmen came up from below blasting away like madmen. With Joseph, who was over on the other side, I returned fire. While I was trying to change a magazine I was hit from one side. A bullet in my stomach, one in my shoulder, and one hit my pistol. Joseph called out to Carlos to come and help us. He came out and yelled something, and Joseph threw one of the grenades downstairs. After that everything stopped. I stayed in the building for quite a while, then one of the ministers who was a doctor helped me down to the street. I don't remember very much about it. From the photographs I see that I was still trying to keep my face hidden. Carlos had emptied my pockets and taken my wallet. Then there was the hospital in Vienna.

Wounded very seriously, barely alive, you left in the aircraft which flew the members of the commando and the OPEC ministers to Algiers.

After spending some time in hospital, you stayed for several months in a Palestinian camp in one of the Arab countries, for most of the time in the company of Carlos.

In fact, you shouldn't really call him Carlos. That name is a complete fabrication. We never called him that ourselves. Depending on whether he was in Europe or in one of the Arab countries, he called himself Johnny or Salem.

Did your wounds keep you out of action for a long time?

No, not too long. I very nearly died on two occasions, first in Vienna and then in Algiers, when my heart stopped beating. I didn't want to stay in Vienna at any price. Given the choice between a prison hospital

(11) The secret police in Iran.



Vladimir Illich Sanchez (left), on his arrival at Algiers airport after the OPEC commando operation of December 1975

and the risk of dying on the journey to Algiers, I would still choose the journey. I'd said that right from the beginning.

When did you take your decision to leave the guerrillas?

After Vienna, my participation in the commando meant that I was trusted and this led to my finding out about a whole lot of things. Everything I was told in the space of a few weeks completely undermined ideas which up to then I had believed in absolutely.

It began around February 1976: after the OPEC operation there

was a post-mortem with Wadi Haddad in one of the Arab countries. The discussion came round to the three deaths in Vienna. Three deaths which to my mind are three murders. Only in one instance had there been any reason to shoot. That was at the Libyan. As soon as Carlos walked in, the Libyan grabbed his Beretta pistol from him. From what we were able to learn afterwards, the Libyans thought at first that this was an attack by an Israeli commando.

The magazine fell out and Carlos had time to draw another pistol and shoot him in the shoulder. He was out of action: when you've been hit by a 9mm parabellum from 50 centimetres away, you've got enough troubles. Carlos fitted the magazine back into the Beretta and literally emptied it into the Libyan.

Did that shock you?

The justifications I was given don't really have anything to do with my own ideas about the left and politics. It was pointless to kill him and if that was the intention, he didn't have to use a whole magazine. Carlos is a good shot: remember the rue Toullier. He explained that he wanted



Carlos at Algiers airport with Algerian Minister Bouteflika

to make an example so that everyone would know where they stood. Killing a guy just as an example, that was totally unlike anything we'd been expecting.

There were two other deaths?

I didn't realise the second one had happened. I only found out about it afterwards. That was the old Austrian cop who wanted to be a hero. He



was already in the lift when he was hit in the back by a bullet. The only one I saw die was the guy from the Iraqi security service.

I'd participated in the Vienna commando on the basis of the idea that the left no longer had anything to expect from legal activity. That instead of talking, we had to fight. But at the same time the struggle is something other than killing people without reason. And if the supporters of the armed struggle come back with the argument that they were only cops, that isn't a good enough reason either.

For me, Vienna was like an electric shock. It was after that I began to become aware of the role I was playing.

There was another important moment when I felt uneasy in my mind. The private aeroplane of an Arab head of state had been sent to pick us up, Carlos and myself, and fly us to his country. When we arrived there was a group of senior officials there to welcome us and a team of newsreel photographers. It seemed that this head of state wanted to meet us. All that was missing was a military band. It really made me feel like a mercenary being thanked for his good and trusty services. So I didn't go along with Carlos.

Did you hesitate for a long time before you reached your decision to leave the guerrillas?

No, not long. My only problem was that I couldn't do it all on my own. You have to imagine what that means. First, you're wanted by the cops. And by cops of every variety. The operation in Vienna was one of the biggest in recent years and the Germans put a price of 50,000DM on my head. But Carlos and Haddad said that the Saudi secret service had put a price of a million dollars on us. What's more, if I decided to leave the guerrillas, there was the risk that they would come after me as well. I'd learnt enough of what they were up to, to know that they wouldn't be too happy about my leaving.

Did you spend much time on discussion?

I was blamed for having put the commando in danger because I refused to shoot at the Iraqi. Because I hadn't chucked a grenade downstairs. While you were in the Arab country you are speaking about, did you try to escape even then?

No, it was impossible. You can get in thanks to a codeword, a kind of recognition signal which opens doors for you pretty quickly, but getting out is another matter.

As early as February I had written a letter from there to a comrade and friend in Germany. It ran to between 35 and 40 pages. I

wrote it to explain to this person why I'd taken part in the operation in Vienna and why I wanted to leave the guerrillas. I didn't put things as directly as that. There was a risk that others would read it. But I remember that all the same there was one sentence which was pretty clear, at least indirectly.

Bonnie had promised me that he would forward this letter to the person it was addressed to. I'd sealed it. Someone from the RZ who was going back to Europe was to deliver it.

A short time later we found ourselves in Rome with some people from the June 2nd Movement who were there to look into the possibility of kidnapping the pope (12). It was then, not long before Entebbe, that I discovered in the course of a conversation that not only had the letter not been sent but that it had been read: Bonnie advised me to keep my mouth shut and not say anything more of the sort I'd written in the letter. He told me it had been forgotten, but I was really wild. According to them, the letter could have been used by the German left as ammunition against the guerrillas. They'd quite simply burnt it.

Was that when you made up your mind to leave?

No, I'd already taken the decision a long time before. I was unable to put it into effect. For that you need outside help. My first contact with those who helped me didn't come until more than a year after Vienna, in February '77.

After that, I was forced to stay with the guerrillas for a further two months, living either in their safe houses or in hotels that they knew of. During this time my friends were looking for a place where I could hide out.

I wrote the first part of my book during those two months, with my revolver by my side in case they came across me while I was writing it.

In case anyone wants to throw doubt on it, I had better add

- (12) Preparations for this action were put into effect, a member of the June 2nd group having spent several weeks observing papal routines at the public audiences given by Paul IV. The action was not carried out. Wadi Haddad declared himself opposed to it, believing that in view of the position held by the Pope, no Arab country could afford to give aid to the commando.

that the idea of writing a book came to me at that time and that no one came along later and talked me into writing it. Just as no one talked me into writing the letter to *Spiegel* in which I denounced the planned assassinations of Galinski and Lipinski.

Did you feel a need to explain yourself?

There are people on the legal left who think it would have been better all round if I'd broken with the guerrillas without saying anything. On the basis of my own experience I would say that that is wrong. When the people in the guerrilla declare that their actions are proof of their love and solidarity and at the same time shove bombs on civil airliners, as they tried to do with the Japanese Air Lines, and all for five million dollars, I really can't see what that has to do with left politics. And what I want to explain is what has become of the guerrilla's political project.

Which means?

The problem is that they claim their actions are independent but that they aren't any longer. Each time they were dependent on Wadi Haddad and his group. For every action in support of the liberation of prisoners the guerrillas are dependent on others because they need countries where they can seek refuge. They depend on others for their money and weapons. All that has a price: the participation of German guerrilla members in other actions. Since Haddad needs people who aren't Arabs for his operations. That even goes as far as participating in actions which are fascist like the one at Entebbe. That's exactly what Entebbe was. What happened at the old airport at Entebbe is Auschwitz as far as I am concerned.

What did happen?

As soon as I found out that at Entebbe they had separated the passengers from the plane into several groups, Jews on one side, everyone else on the other, I immediately associated that with what had happened at the freight yards where the trains left for Auschwitz. That German guerrilla members like Boese and Brigitte Kuhlmann could allow themselves to divide people up as they did, I can't imagine anything more pathetic . . .

. . . Are you sure about that? How did you find out about it?

Certain. Haddad himself told me about it when he got back. He was at Entebbe.

He took part in the action?

He didn't let himself be seen with the hostages but he had daily

meetings with the members of the commando and discussed the progress of the action with them. He got out of it by luck. He left the airport a short time before the Israeli intervention.

Originally, I was to have taken part at Entebbe. Haddad had picked me out as one of the members of the commando. But I didn't want to go and I used the after-effects of my wounds as an excuse not to. But what I had been told about the action bore no relation to what actually happened.



Waddi Haddad amongst other Palestinian soldiers, in a Palestinian camp

Once you had made up your mind to leave the guerrillas, were specific threats made against you?

I couldn't go on hiding behind my wounds indefinitely. Especially since I was coming along fairly well after a few months were up. The others had seen me running and jumping during training sessions in the camp. I tried to play for time by putting forward various plans for action. I even suggested kidnapping Caroline of Monaco. But that wasn't enough. In the end I came with them to Europe, where they intended putting the final touches to their operational plans. Near the end, they wanted

me to enter another European country and do a number of things. I refused. I told them I was leaving to set up my own guerrilla group. The people from June 2nd who were there with us winced a bit and became suspicious. They told me that 'I couldn't leave. I knew too much, especially at the international level'. Those are words which I'm not likely to forget.

The threat was specific. There I was in Europe and they wanted me to return immediately to the Arab country we'd come from. They insisted several times and told me it was an order. I refused. I knew that I would never be able to get away from there without authorisation.

Another time, at a safe house we had in the mountains somewhere in Europe, there was another quarrel. I don't know what it was they intended. To kill me or to frighten me. It happened two or three days before I cleared out and sent my letter to Spiegel. The new boss of the Revolutionary Cells, the person who replaced Boese after Entebbe, came to see me. We were to talk things over, just the two of us. He assured me that he had come alone as agreed. Then, as we were coming out of the house I saw through the darkness a car I recognised parked in the road. The door opened and like in a second-rate thriller I saw there were two people inside, thanks to the interior light which came on. I took cover and then grabbed the other guy, who launched himself into a complicated explanation. I told him to clear out. I went back into the house to get my pistol and all my ammunition. I went out the other side. They'd already gone. The same night, I packed my bag, called a taxi, and left.

It was at that point that you wrote the letter to Spiegel in which you denounced the planned assassinations of the leaders of the Jewish communities in Berlin and Frankfurt?

Straight after that. When I read through that letter now, I tell myself that if I had been able to write it in peace and quiet, it would probably have been slightly different.

Were you criticised in Germany for this letter?

Yes. And quite rightly on a number of points. But you have to remember the situation I was in when I wrote it! There were also people who criticised me for choosing Spiegel as my forum. But if I'd chosen to send my letter to Pflasterstrand (13), it would not have been

(13) The Frankfurt Spontis' monthly paper, edited by Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

as credible. Now, I wrote it for one main reason: to prevent those two operations. I was pressed for time. I didn't write that letter just to shout, Hurray, I've left the guerrillas.

Things can't have been easy for you afterwards.

You have to imagine what it meant to leave the guerrillas. After the action against OPEC in Vienna, I was allowed to have knowledge of a great many things. I stayed for several months in a Palestinian camp. For a long time I lived with the man they call Carlos. In certain countries which I won't name, I sat at the same table as people in very official positions. And I should imagine that there are several secret services who would like to get their hands on me. Plus several police forces, not to mention the three German guerrilla movements.

But what is it you're aiming at, why for instance did you invite me here to give this long interview?

I'm not out to give any names away. Whether they're the names of people or governments. I want to give an account of a political experience, to pass on the lessons to be learnt from it and furnish you with a statement from the inside. It's certainly not my intention to put anyone in danger, however wide the rift that divides us today. The only names I will give you will be those of people who are already known or who have died, like Wilfried Boese, Brigitte Kuhlmann, or Wadi Haddad. Or of fascists like Idi Amin Dada, whose misdeeds I wouldn't want to cover up in any case: the murder of that old woman at Entebbe, for instance. That's why I wrote my book. On that score, it's all the same to me what price I have to pay. I want to speak about about those things . . .

. . . The murder of Dora Bloch, the passenger from the plane who was hospitalised at Entebbe?

There too, it was Wadi Haddad who told me about it when he came back from Entebbe. He not only confirmed that she really had been murdered, but also Idi Amin had assured him that he had killed her with his own hands! That's barbarity, pure and simple. Once again, I wasn't there, I can only report what Haddad said. It was good enough for me.

When did you meet Carlos for the first time?

Carlos who? I never knew any Carlos. That name is a complete invention. The person they call Carlos does exist but his name is Vladimir Ilich Sanchez. As I told you, he had two nicknames then, Johnny and Salem. It was Wilfried Boese who invented all that one day

when he was arrested in Sanchez's flat. He made up a story to tell the police. That he had called to see someone by the name of Carlos and that this Carlos had instructed him to make contact with armed groups in the Basque country. But none of that was true. Boese was extradited and then released in Germany. That was before the incident in the rue Toullier.

So when was it you met Johnny-Salem?

It was even earlier, at the beginning of '75 in Paris. I'd gone there with



Idi Amin Dada (right) and Dora Bloch, passenger on the Air France airbus at Entebbe, who was strangled in her Kampala hospital bed by the head of the Ugandan state himself

Boese. But I didn't grasp much of what was said. Carlos and Boese spoke to each other in English, and since I don't know any English . . . Then you met him again?

Yes, again in Paris, with other people. There were several Palestinian leaders there, including Michael Mourkhabel, whose name can be mentioned since he was killed, later, by his friend Carlos during the gun battle in the rue Toullier.

What was your impression of this Vladimir-Johnny-Salem?

At first I'd taken him to be an Italian mafioso. He was really a very cool guy and that's what struck me, he knew an enormous amount about politics and about the Palestinian question. The first time I saw him, he showed us his collection of weapons, in his hotel room, as calmly as if he were showing us a stamp collection.

You were impressed by him?

Yes. Because he didn't waste time on details. The second time, to my mind he appeared like a kind of positive James Bond. He read newspapers by the ton, could speak six languages and get by in several more. In the meantime he had become a myth. What did he himself think about that?

It was the press that made him into a myth. For his part he said something which I think was right: the more I'm talked about, the more dangerous I appear. That's all the better for me.

And what is he doing now?

As far as I know, nothing any more. He dropped out shortly after Entebbe. In Vienna, in December '75, it was his initiative that stopped the second part of the operation from being carried out. He negotiated that with an Arab government which apparently guaranteed him its protection later when he left the guerrillas. And also provided him with money.

It was known that he was leaving?

Yes, everyone had been warned. Including Haddad.

Can you tell us without betraying any secrets what he was like as a person? How he lived?

When he talked about his own way of life, he admitted quite readily that he had remained a bourgeois. And I have to admit that we weren't unhappy with that way of life, even though we criticised it. He always dressed very stylishly and stayed at luxury hotels. He said it was better for his own safety. It must be said that there was no lack of money for those operations, something like a hundred dollars per person per day.



Vladimir Illich Sanchez, alias Johnny, alias Salem, with his mother (left) and a friend

You can live quite comfortably on that.

There is the myth of Carlos and the reality. Do they coincide?

One story to the point: when Spiegel published the best parts of that book about Carlos written by someone in England, he kept all the articles and had them translated. He did tend to go along with his press image a bit. He compares himself with the character of the Jackal in Forsyth's book.

He identifies himself with the myth?

Yes. When he saw from the wanted posters in Germany that the price on his head was no larger than that on anyone else's, he said that he was going to write a letter of protest! He wants to be the big man. I had a quarrel with him one day because I hadn't done what he'd told me to. He took out his pistol and made a show of force.

But at the same time, he was a very supportive guy, who did his share of the work on the same basis as everyone else.

Are the accounts of his past accurate?

Yes, he comes originally from an important Venezuelan family, even though his father was in the Communist Party. The sons were all educated as communists and were all named in memory of Lenin. He was in actual fact a student at the Lumumba University in Moscow. That's where he first came into contact with the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine).

But all the stories about Carlos the Soviet agent . . .

That's rubbish. He was expelled from Lumumba University after they staged a demonstration. They don't like that kind of thing very much over there. The Palestinians asked him to join them and during the Black September fighting in Jordan he was one of the few non-Arabs to take part.

And how would you define him politically?

That's not easy.

You were nonetheless close to him for several months?

Yes, but since he doesn't speak German, our conversations tended to be rather limited. He takes his inspiration from the words of Ho Chi Minh. 'Carry the revolution into every country'. So he moves from one country to another and tries to get things moving. He made a pretty good attempt at persuading the Revolutionary Cells, to try and take things in hand after the death of Boese.

What did he talk about?

The last six months of the time we were together almost every minute

of the day, he was very much taken up with his own prospects.

What did he think of the communists?

He didn't like them. He thought that they were corrupt. He didn't define himself as a Marxist, but rather as an international revolutionary, not unlike Che Guevara. He talked to me about operations by ETA. The assassination of Carrero Blanco made him admire them a lot. He was very taken up with the technical side of things, precision.

What did he read?

Playboy . . . In the Arab countries, you know, there aren't many books to be found. He lived out of a suitcase, in the rue Toullier there was a bed, a wardrobe with his weapons in it, and his suitcase on the floor. And then, most important, his bathroom! He's a very anal type, a maniac about cleanliness, and washes himself all the time.

With what sort of attitude did he set about preparing his operations?

It's what I would call the perspective of massacre. The more violent things get, the more people will respect you. The greater the chance of achieving your demands. That was the basis of the killings at the cafe in Saint Germain. The French Embassy in The Hague had been occupied by members of the Japanese Red Army who were demanding the liberation of one of their people who was in prison in Paris. Since the French weren't giving way, he went and threw a grenade into the cafe . . .

He told you that himself?

Yes. Later, Michael Mourkhabel placed five or six empty grenade cases in a left-luggage office, phoned the authorities and told them to go and take a look, he had the contents and if they didn't liberate the guy he would dump the lot in bars and cinemas. And they set him free at once. That was the sort of thing he thought it was necessary to do?

He said that to get anywhere you had to walk over corpses.

In Vienna he did the same sort of thing again. Right in the middle of the operation, he left his loaded Beretta lying on a table and walked round the room with his automatic pistol in his hand. I'd been reading about that in the papers and I asked him if it was true. He told me that he'd done it on purpose to see if there were any security service guys in the room. If anyone had tried to get hold of the Beretta, Carlos would have started a terrific massacre since it's impossible to aim accurately with an automatic pistol. The same thing happened with regard to the death of Michael Mourkhabel in the rue Toullier (14). He confirmed to me that he had killed him, but not because he'd been

betrayed by him like they said. When the guys from' the DST burst in and he began to shoot, Mourkhabel stayed in the corner and put his hands up. So Carlos fired at him because he hadn't helped him. And yet they were good friends.

With regard to the rue Toullier, people still don't know the full story of this incident. No one up til now has been able to explain what happened.

It's pretty simple. Here's how Carlos told it to me. The cops who had arrested Mourkhabel when he came back from Lebanon were guided by him to the rue Toullier. He must have been hoping that Carlos would get him out of the tight corner he was in. The cops went in, but the shooting didn't start immediately. There was a pause in which, as I understood it, the cops were waiting for something. All the while Carlos was moving around the room and doing all sorts of little things to put them off their guard. He even shaved. And when he'd finished shaving, that's when he put on his jacket quite nonchalantly. He wasn't wearing the jacket when the cops came in. That's where he had his gun. That's how he got the better of them.

With all the coolness of a Western gunfighter. I can understand why the French police took care not to explain the mystery. It would have made them look even more ridiculous.

There was also the incident to do with the owner of Marks and Spencers, Joseph Sieff, in London. He's an elderly millionaire. Carlos went to his house and rang the doorbell. The guy himself opened the door to him. He asked him what his name was and shot him.

For what reason?

He was a Jew. That was why.

???

There were others on the list they found at his girlfriend's place in London, you know. Rubenstein and Menuhin the violinist.

He had something against the Jews?

No, he wasn't at all anti-Semitic. Those were operations to expose the Israeli racket.

- (14) On 27 June 1975 "Carlos" managed to escape from a flat in the rue Toullier in Paris, having killed two inspectors of the DST and his friend Michael Mourkhabel, whom the police had just intercepted.





The affair of the rue Toullier: the DST made itself look ridiculous and lost two agents; in the process the cowboy Carlos killed his 'friend' Mourkabal. Top left: the arsenal discovered in another raid. Bottom left: The picture of Carlos released on this occasion. Top right: Carlos again, taken by the police just before the raid. Bottom right: the flat in rue Toullier.

He wasn't afraid that his action would be regarded as anti-Semitic? That wasn't the impression I got. Wilfried Boese suggested to Haddad that an attempt should be made on the life of Simon Wiesenthal, the man who succeeded in tracing Eichmann. The reason for that was that Wiesenthal works in close collaboration with Mossad, the Israeli secret service. When the project was being discussed, Carlos said it was madness to want to kill him. That he was an anti-Nazi.

Carlos was a very contradictory character. After Entebbe, he was very enthusiastic about what the Israelis had done. He said that when an enemy did something well, you had to be able to recognise the fact.

And what was your own reaction when you heard things of that kind? I took it in but I didn't say very much. You know, it wasn't easy.

But Boese had been an active militant on the extreme left in Frankfurt and knew what anti-Semitism was, so how was it possible for him to suggest things like that?

I don't know. In my opinion it was because they were dependent on Wadi Haddad's group. That's where they got their money and their weapons.

You had known Boese in West Germany and you saw the way he developed. Was it your impression that he'd changed?

No doubt about it. I knew him well. It was also through him that I became a member of the Revolutionary Cells. Earlier on, he'd done lots of good things. He was a very good comrade.

It's my feeling that if you stay with the guerrillas for a long time, then sooner or later you throw lots of things overboard. Everything from your humanity to your political ideals. You sink deeper and deeper into the shit. Once you start out along that road, the only way to go is straight ahead. You can't escape any more. If you get caught, you'll go down for 10 or 15 years, no matter what you've done. In Germany it operates on the principle of collective responsibility. Take the Stockholm trial: five people were found guilty of two murders. But all five of them didn't kill those two.

That was my problem after Vienna. With an operation like that there's no way you can get yourself off the hook. In any event you've passed the critical point. And to get yourself off the hook as I've done, by hiding out for years on end, that's not much of a prospect.

But that isn't sufficient to explain everything.

The only thing the guerrillas have on their minds is liberating prisoners.

And for that they need base areas, logistics. To mount an operation like the Schleyer kidnapping you need an enormous amount of things. You become dependent. The Revolutionary Cells for instance get 3000 dollars a month.

And then there are the weapons too. They get massive supplies. In return for these services Haddad naturally asked them to reciprocate.

As far as the Revolutionary Cells are concerned, their collaboration with the Palestinians goes back farther than that of the RAF. Boese already had a hand in things at the time of the massacre at the Olympic Games. He was the one who made the arrangements for those guys in Munich.

To my mind this is the politics of the massacre. One of the guerrilla groups wanted to make an attempt on the life of the president of the court at Stammheim. Their plan was to fill a minibus with propane cylinders. They would have fixed him for sure, but they would also have fixed a whole lot of other people in the area. The relation between the ends and the means employed becomes insane. It makes me think of decimation.

But when was it that you found out about all these things?

After Vienna. Before that, I'd recently heard about a similar idea: during an embassy occupation, there was the plan to blow up a luxury hotel, again with propane cylinders.

You didn't express any disagreement at that point?

I didn't dare to put it into words. That was in the early stages, before Vienna. And I really did want to participate in operations. I wanted to fight and I was afraid that they wouldn't want anything more to do with me. But after Vienna when I moved over to the international section of the RZ, discussions of that kind went on every day.

But they never acted on any of them?

There were others they acted on. There was one thing that really shook me. That was the incident involving a civil airliner from Japanese Air Lines, in April '76. It was Haddad's idea. He'd prepared a blue Samsonite suitcase by lining it with plastic explosive. It was meant to explode while the plane was in mid-air.

You're sure about that?

I was there when preparations were made and I watched the commando take possession of the case.

But what was the objective?

They wanted 5 million dollars . . . But it didn't come off. June 2nd had

taken the case away with them. But the baggage hold was packed full, so the RAF tried in their turn. One of the stewardesses must have seen that the case hadn't been identified. It was taken back into the hangar and that's where it exploded.

Was anyone killed?

No, plastic doesn't do much damage unless you put it in a confined space. In the Palestinian camp, that was one of the tests of courage, as they called it: you had to detonate a charge at a distance of one metre.

All that for 5 million dollars. These aren't just fantasies. It was Boese who took the letter to the JAL office . . .

But in all the months you spent exclusively in the company of people in the guerrilla, did you never get the feeling that some of them were asking themselves questions — even in a limited way — about the meaning of these actions and their effects?

No, but then of course I can't speak for everyone. I myself was in the Revolutionary Cells and my major contacts were with Wilfried Boese and Brigitte Kuhlmann. They stayed for a few weeks after Vienna. Then I had dealings with several people from June 2nd and finally with one person from the RAF.

But you had discussions?

It wasn't easy to have discussions. In the camp there was an order from Haddad forbidding people to talk to each other without permission.

There was someone from another guerrilla movement living alongside.

You were allowed to talk to them only if you had permission.

But it wasn't only in the camp that you met them. What about in Europe?

There, almost all my contacts were in the RZ apart from a few in June 2nd. Over and above, but in different circumstances, I'd had some contact with the RAF.

What did they think of the criticisms of the guerrillas made by the German left?

I remember that at the time of a conference held in Frankfurt (conference against repression organised by the 'Sozialistischer Buro'), Joschka Fischer (one of the speakers from the Frankfurt Spontis) made an appeal to the guerrillas, 'Comrades, lay down your guns and pick up the paving stones'. They killed themselves laughing. They don't pay any notice to what the left is doing. One example was the bomb aimed at a leading lawyer in Frankfurt, which exploded right in the middle of a campaign against the Ministry of Justice that was going really well. It

put a stop to everything!

You say that some people from the Revolutionary Cells had come to this Palestinian camp to undergo instruction. What sort of things did they discuss?

Their actions against automatic ticket machines on public transport. . . . ?

There was this big campaign by the RZ in Germany against the increase in fares and the introduction of ticket machines.

And that's what they discussed?

Yes, there was a big debate in the camp about the possibilities for further activity . . .

Ticket machines on the one hand and large-scale international actions on the other, it's like chalk and cheese. It's like local crafts against heavy industry.

That was always the case. This was Boese's own little sideshow. For a time the idea of forging savings bank books or cheque books was discussed. The passbook idea kept some people busy for a year. I ought to mention that there were two sections in the RZ, the German one and the international one.

And there were never any debates between the two?

After the deaths of Boese and Kuhlmann at Entebbe, the rest of the international section wanted to mount a retaliatory action at an airport where they'd discovered a weakness in the security arrangements. But the specialist they needed for it was working in the German section at the time. And in the middle of their preparations the guy they'd asked for help went and pinched all the weapons the international section had in their cache. He took the lot. The worst of it was that some of the weapons had been intended for another group. There were quite a few threats made, mainly by Carlos, and the guys put them all back again. The end of the story was when the other guerilla group came along and pinched them all again. Crazy, isn't it?

There had also been a similar episode before Vienna when Boese as part of the preparations had tried to get the RAF to hand over to him a particular weapon which he claimed was absolutely necessary. But that wasn't true at all! I'm sure the RAF would never have got it back again. He would have told them that it had been left behind in Vienna.

That little sideshow you were talking about, that's a classic example of the logic of organisations. And then, in addition, the weight of

clandestinity must have an important part to play?

That takes up 80% of your time. You can't afford to let your guard slip for a minute. You have to encode, decode, and recode addresses and messages. What's more, the codes change: you have to keep all that in your head. I can't go into detail about that. All I can say is that it's an insane waste of time. . Arranging a meeting is a whole rigmarole. Not to mention all the security measures you have to take to eliminate any possibility of being followed. You get into habits. I noticed that when we were in one of our hideouts we had a tendency to talk in whispers, even when there wasn't the slightest risk that we would be overheard. All that must contribute to cutting down on political discussion?

I stayed in that Palestinian camp for about nine months. I can't remember having taken part in more than one real political discussion. And in Europe we only had discussions on guerrilla actions. There was a political background to them each time, but they were technical discussions. Knowing how to attack a bank or kidnap someone, that's what I mean by technical discussions.

What kind of person was Wadi Haddad?

He told me the story of his life at one point. The house where his family lived had been completely destroyed by the Israelis. And from that day on he swore to himself that he wouldn't let up on the Israelis until the day he died. That was why he'd founded his own group, the PFLP Special Operations, having previously been one of the founders of the PFLP along with George Habbash.

Do you still think of the Palestinians as your comrades?

Yes, I would still call them comrades. I wouldn't associate them with the idiocies of Haddad. In addition I often got on better with them than with the Germans. In the camp I often found myself whistling the tune from Exodus. The Germans didn't like that at all while the Palestinians thought it was quite a laugh. But for people like us it wasn't easy to understand their attitudes.

How do you mean?

There was very strong competition between them to take part in the actions. Even the most murderous ones. The ones they knew they wouldn't come back from. One of the people who was with me in Vienna, Joseph — that was his nom de guerre — had joined Haddad's group fairly recently and his brother, who was in another group but had been in it longer, was jealous because Joseph was taking part in an armed action while he himself had never been given an opportunity yet.

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18 October 1977, Mogadishu: a seriously wounded member of the Palestinian commando gives the victory sign after the assault on the Lufthansa airliner

Another example, I remember Nabil, one of the comrades who was killed on the Mogadishu operation. After Entebbe he was to have taken part in another retaliatory action in Istanbul. Nabil was furious that he hadn't gone along, even though he knew very well that the two

members of the commando had been arrested and condemned to death in Turkey.

In Haddad's group there was even a detachment which called itself "Suicide Operations". That's what they were trained for. Nabil for example had had to walk about the camp for three weeks carrying a grenade and a machine pistol without ever letting them out of his hands.

In the camp, the training is followed by a process of selection. If you aren't chosen it means disgrace. It's the same after they've been in action. You remember the three Palestinians who'd survived the Munich massacre? Two of them had only been lightly wounded. The third seriously. In spite of that he continued to fire his Kalachnikov until the very end. All three of them were liberated. When they arrived back the first two were expelled and the third was given a hero's welcome.

One gets the impression that the different guerrilla groups are not really interested in the concrete political situation in West Germany. Can their analyses still be reduced to the same formulas, those that were to be found in their statements several years ago?

From the beginning the RAF has always said: the important thing is to exacerbate contradictions in such a way that the situation becomes more and more openly fascist. That the important thing is to make the latent fascism that's predominant in West Germany clearly visible. After that, the masses will rally round. And also the left, including those who are opposed to them today.

This climate creates difficulties not only for the legal left, but also for the guerrillas. Despite that, they want things to deteriorate even further. They're striking blows which rebound against themselves. There's only one outlook: they mount their actions and are forced to disappear from West Germany. Life in West Germany is already difficult enough, so life underground . . .

And what do the guerrillas say about the German left?

There's that well-known slogan which the supporters of the RAF sometimes used to shout on demonstrations: "Baader out, Danny in". Liberate Baader and in exchange throw Cohn-Bendit in the hole!

As far as they're concerned the left doesn't understand anything. So say the RAF tries to bring moral pressure to bear on the left in connection with the prisoners, who are in actual fact in a terrible situation. But as soon as you give your support, you also have to declare your agreement with the guerrillas' politics, otherwise they treat you